

Land Use & Zoning 3

3.1 The Creation of a Mixed-Use Zoning District

The Southwest Downtown Plan (the Plan) proposes establishing a mixed-use district for most of the Southwest Downtown Plan Area (Plan Area). The Plan Area is already home to a variety of land uses. Improvements in the Plan Area to provide additional on-street parking and sidewalks to encourage pedestrian circulation are in the planning stages. Several factors should be encouraged in the creation of a mixed-use district. These include:

- Encouraging diverse uses to locate in the neighborhood to provide a variety of housing options, retail and services
- Encouraging the placement of new buildings close to property lines with parking in the rear of the building in order to engage pedestrians and de-emphasize parking facilities with the goal of creating a dynamic streetscape
- Encouraging developments with quality construction that buffer the impacts of parking facilities and vehicular traffic
- Encouraging neighborhood-enhancing economic activity

Mixed-use development lends itself well to neighborhoods that are already developed with both commercial and residential land uses, as is the case in the Plan Area. However, the combination and intensity of land uses must

be compatible with the development pattern and character of the surrounding neighborhood and existing adjacent land uses. In mixed-use districts, multiple uses may be permitted on the same lot, or even within the same structure. However, it should be noted that more stringent building codes are likely to apply, especially when combining residential and non-residential uses. Developments with only one land use would still be permitted in a mixed-use zoning district.

The purpose of adopting the Southwest Downtown Plan along with proposing a mixed-use zoning ordinance for the Plan Area is to facilitate redevelopment in this established neighborhood in a coherent manner. Development standards would then complement the Plan Area's traditional neighborhood structure, and different uses could be allowed to coexist with minimal conflict.

3.2 Summary of District Design Guidelines Study

Early on in the planning process, the City of Round Rock contracted with Carter Design Associates of Austin, Texas to complete a visual survey to identify aspects of the Plan Area's historical development pattern that give it character and could be preserved or encouraged in future development. The result was a report entitled, "Principles of Design, Southwest Downtown District" (the Report). Copies of the Report in its entirety are available for review at the Planning and Community Development Department. A summary of the report follows.

Summary of the Report, "Principles of Design, Southwest Downtown District"

The five design objectives outlined in the Report are to:

1. Maintain a sense of connection with the historic street grid and single-family house traditions, while accommodating new construction.
2. Enhance connectivity between destinations.
3. Minimize the impacts of increased automobile traffic.



Figure 3.1: The Plan Area's many large trees are some of its most significant assets.

4. Enhance pedestrian activity.
5. Continue the tradition of landscaped right-of-way and specimen tree planting at the street edge and in front yards.



Figure 3.2: Some of the historic properties in the Southwest Downtown Plan Area

Several features of the Plan Area are noted in the Report, including the existing development pattern, which is one of traditional square blocks. Alleys are still present in some cases, or there are at least alley remnants on several blocks. Distinct landscaped zones strengthen the original rhythm, regularity and setbacks of buildings in the Plan Area. There are many large specimen trees, both in the public right-of-way and on private lots. In addition, there are several examples of historic architecture in the Plan Area.

The existing architectural style of the Plan Area is varied, with the noteworthy historic structures dating from the early 1910s through the 1930s. Styles range from transitional vernacular with Victorian influences for the earlier structures, to ones showing marked Craftsman detailing for the later ones. According to Carter Design Associates, although most properties in the Plan Area are not designated as historic landmarks, they do contribute to a vernacular development pattern that relates to the growth of Round Rock and a cultural landscape characteristic of small town development. Conserving the look and feel of the Plan Area as a whole forms the basis of the recommended design principles found in Appendix A (Land Use Analysis).

Overall, Carter Design Associates recommends a “conservation” approach to preservation in the Plan Area. This is defined as the recognition that the Plan Area achieves its significance through contributions by many properties taken as a whole as opposed to a collection of individually important properties. By identifying existing characteristics of setting, site design, building style and scale, and not a particular period of influence, the character of the Plan Area can be maintained even as uses change. New construction can begin to bridge the gap between the traditional architectural styles and later design disparities, thus keeping the Plan Area vibrant.

3.3 Zoning

The City of Round Rock's Code of Ordinances specifies a range of permitted uses for each zoning district. Currently the Southwest Downtown Plan Area is comprised of four zoning districts. Most of the Plan Area is zoned General Commercial (C-1). A limited number of properties remain Single-Family Residential – Standard Lot (SF-2), three are zoned Neighborhood Commercial (C-2) and four are zoned Light Industrial (LI). To date, any adopted zoning changes in the Plan Area have been owner-initiated.

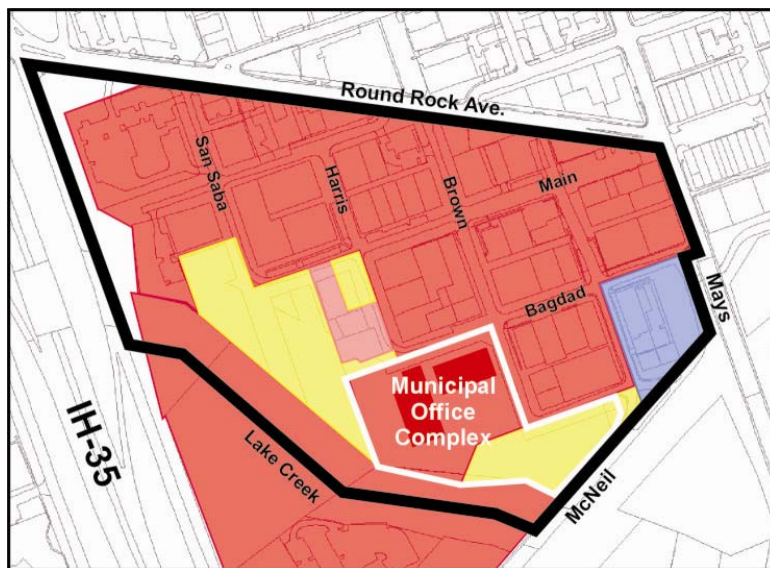


Figure 3.3:
Current Zoning Map*

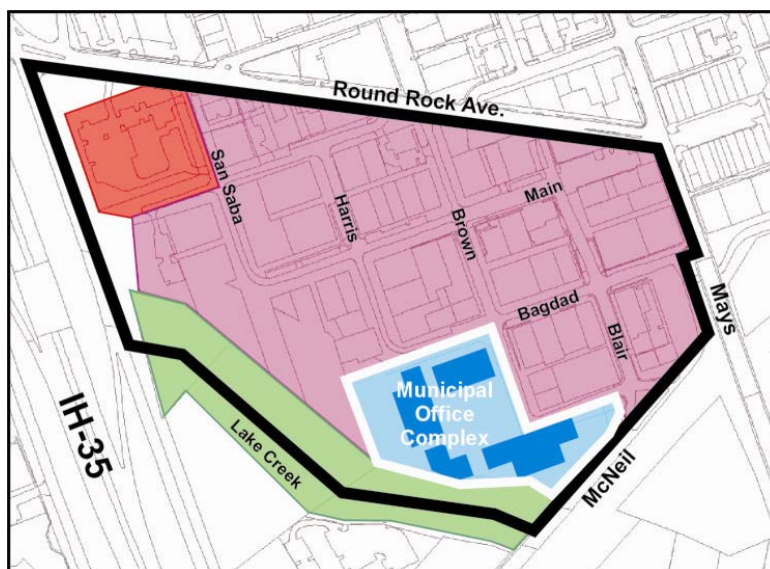
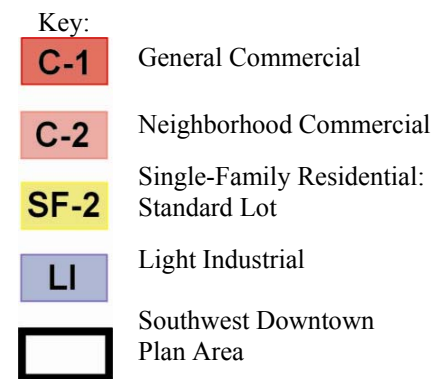
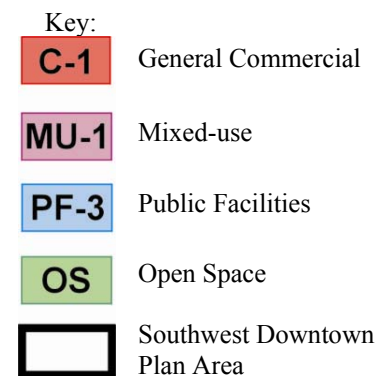


Figure 3.4:
Proposed Zoning Map*



* Historic Overlay (H) Zoning is not shown on maps.

Figure 3.5

These land uses were identified as most desirable for the Plan Area in a public neighborhood workshop:

- Single-Family Residences
- Townhouses
- Upper-Story Residential
- Assisted Living Facilities
- Administrative and Business Services
- Office
- Medical Office
- Retail Sales & Services
- Food Sales
- Limited Art & Craft Studio
- Indoor and Outdoor Entertainment Uses
- Laundry Services & Dry Cleaning
- Retail Plant Nurseries
- Eating Establishments
- Bed & Breakfast Establishments
- Museums
- Parks
- Community Services
- Day Care
- Commercial Parking

The map in Figure 3.3 shows the current zoning, and Figure 3.4 shows the proposed zoning for the Southwest Downtown Plan Area. A new mixed-use zoning district (MU-1) is proposed for most of the Plan Area, with a few exceptions. The property on the corner of the IH-35 Frontage Road and Round Rock Avenue would remain General Commercial (C-1), since it has IH-35 frontage. The Municipal Office Complex is proposed to be zoned as a Public Facilities District, and Lake Creek is proposed to be rezoned to the Open Space District (OS). Historic Overlay Zoning for designated local landmark properties will continue to apply, even if a property's base zoning changes.

The land uses listed in Figure 3.5 and defined in Appendix A (Land Use Analysis) were identified at a neighborhood public workshop as having the highest importance for the Plan Area. Those uses included as preferred land uses will be the basis for determining permitted uses in the proposed MU-1 Zoning District. Some uses may only be included when they meet certain conditions.

One concern expressed by workshop participants was what would happen to existing land uses in the Plan Area that are not included in the proposed MU-1 Zoning District? In this case, the property becomes a "nonconforming use". Business operation could continue, but expansion of the building would not be allowed in that location.

The proposed MU-1 Zoning District permits mixed-use buildings and includes an expanded definition of "home occupations", permitting a broader variety of live/work accommodations than is frequently allowed in standard zoning districts.

Figure 3.6 highlights some of the differences between the General Commercial (C-1) and proposed Mixed-Use (MU-1) Zoning Districts. The proposed MU-1 District would permit narrower lots than in C-1, in keeping with the original platting pattern of the Plan Area. The most notable differences between the proposed MU-1 and existing C-1 Zoning Districts' requirements concern height limits and parking requirements. MU-1 proposes

Figure 3.6: General Commercial (C-1) and Mixed-Use (MU-1) Zoning Districts

C-1 and MU-1 Zoning		
	General Commercial (C-1)	Mixed-Use (MU-1)
Examples of Land Uses:		
retail sales & service, indoor entertainment, day care, government facilities, community services, eating establishments, office, medical office, bed & breakfast, single-family residences, upper-story residential	permitted	permitted
mortuary, hotel, auto service & repair, carwash, vehicle sales & rental, gasoline & fuel sales, self-service storage, gun shop, tattoo shop, veterinarian	permitted	<u>not</u> permitted
townhouses	<u>not</u> permitted	permitted
Density & Development Standards:		
minimum lot width	50 ft.	20-25 ft.
minimum front setback	15 ft.	0-15 ft. (depending on use)
minimum side setback (not abutting existing SF)	0 or 10 ft.	0 or 5 ft.
minimum rear setback	0 or 10 ft.	5 or 20 ft.
maximum height	5 stories	3 stories
upper-story residential	less than 50% GFA*	up to 67% GFA*
Parking:		
townhouses	N/A	2 spaces
upper-story residences	1.5 per bedroom (BR)	efficiency or 1BR = 1 space 2+ BRs = 2 spaces
commercial uses	no parking credit	parking credit for existing area
retail sales & services, indoor entertainment, community service, office	4 spaces / 1000 sq. ft.	2.5 spaces / 1000 sq. ft.
medical office	6.7 spaces / 1000 sq. ft.	2.5 spaces / 1000 sq. ft.
eating establishments	10 spaces / 1000 sq. ft.	5 spaces / 1000 sq. ft.

* GFA: gross floor area of all levels as measured from the outside perimeter of the building.

limiting building height to three stories instead of five stories. However, it should be noted that with C-1 development and parking standards, it would be nearly impossible to build a five-story building without structured garage parking or assembling many parcels of land. Additional setback requirements separating commercial buildings from residentially-zoned properties could further complicate the development of a C-1 parcel of land. Parking requirements in the proposed MU-1 Zoning District will be relaxed because of the parking plan for the Plan Area, outlined in Chapter 5 (Parking).

3.4 New Development

One of the goals of the Southwest Downtown Plan is to provide for new uses in the Plan Area, for the conversion from residential to non-residential uses, and for expansion of existing buildings. New development could also be in the form of new construction. One of the ways that development in the Plan Area may be accomplished while still maintaining its character is by developing appropriate design guidelines. In public workshops, the neighborhood examined issues of height, setbacks, buffering and compatibility between existing and new uses. The MU-1 Zoning District proposed for the Plan Area provides the standards that are required for new development. Additionally, design guidelines are provided in Chapter 8 (Design Recommendations) of this Plan to further address the desires of the neighborhood, to meet the goals of the Southwest Downtown Plan, and to meet the objectives outlined in the Carter Design Associates Report. Upon adoption of the proposed MU-1 Zoning District, projects will be reviewed by the design standards delineated in a new ordinance.

Design guidelines will be outlined in this Plan to:

- Further address the desires of the neighborhood
- Meet the goals of the Southwest Downtown Plan
- Meet the objectives outlined in the Carter Design Associates Report

3.5 Compatibility with Existing Single-Family Residences

Adopting mixed-use instead of commercial zoning is intended to encourage residential as well as commercial occupancy in the Plan Area. Additionally, new single-family homes will also be permitted in the proposed MU-1

Zoning District for the Plan Area. Residences of all kinds, including new single-family homes, built after the adoption of the proposed ordinance are assumed to have made design accommodations for locating in close proximity to non-residential uses.

Several existing houses in the Plan Area are still occupied as single-family residences, but they were built when adjacent non-residential development was not anticipated. Certain accommodations would be suggested for new construction or conversion (to a non-single-family use) for buildings abutting an existing single-family residential property. Accommodations could include increasing the separation between buildings, requiring fences for uses abutting single-family residences, and using translucent windows for any windows facing single-family residences.

A new non-residential establishment on a property abutting an existing detached single-family residence will need to meet additional compatibility requirements, as outlined in the proposed Mixed-Use Zoning Ordinance. The existing residence must have been under continuous single-family occupation since the adoption of the proposed MU-1 Zoning District. A list of these properties' addresses will be included in the proposed Ordinance. If one of these residences is converted to a non-single-family use for a period greater than ninety days, the additional compatibility requirements will no longer apply. If a property is later converted back to a single-family residential use, it will not be added to the protected properties list, as the new owner is assumed to be aware of and accept any inconveniences posed by nearby non-single-family uses. If an existing single-family property's owner wishes to waive these additional requirements, he or she may do so; however, these restrictions will not be reinstated.

3.6 Land Use & Zoning Recommendations:

Land Use:

- Adopt a Mixed-Use Zoning District for the majority of the Southwest Downtown Plan Area, incorporating the desired land uses identified by neighborhood public workshop participants.
- Include design guidelines for development in the Mixed-Use Zoning District that meet the goals of the Southwest Downtown Plan.
- Complete the Municipal Office Complex and remaining proposed public facilities.
- Rezone the Municipal Office Complex to a Public Facilities District.
- Rezone the Lake Creek Corridor to an Open Space District (OS).
- Allow the block on the corner of Round Rock Avenue and IH-35 to retain General Commercial (C-1) Zoning since it has IH-35 frontage.
- Retain historic development patterns wherever possible. Site design should relate to the existing historic fabric.
- Identify and protect sites, buildings and structures with significant cultural, aesthetic and social characteristics which are part of the City of Round Rock's heritage.
- Plan public space to encourage pedestrian use. Spaces should be linked to key activity centers and pedestrian routes where possible. Site and building design leading to and surrounding public spaces should help encourage their use.
- Encourage new development that provides for a mixture of uses, including retail, office and residential.
- Ensure that the combination and intensity of land uses is compatible with current and future development patterns, the character of the surrounding neighborhood, and existing adjacent land uses.

- Provide additional development requirements for properties abutting existing single-family residences to ensure compatibility between adjacent properties.
- Provide guidance in the development of new structures that bears in mind the Plan's land use recommendations and addresses the compatibility issues voiced at public workshops.

Mixed-Use Zoning:

- Encourage and support a diversity of businesses and services downtown.
- Permit a range of housing options, including single-family residences, townhouses, upper-story residences, and live/work units.
- Adopt development standards to encourage the redevelopment of lots that would not be allowed under current commercial standards.
- Encourage development in the Plan Area that meets the intent of the Southwest Downtown Plan and the proposed Mixed-Use Zoning District. The application of design guidelines to all development projects emphasizes quality architecture and development, and places a high value on varied and distinctive building designs, sensitive treatment of historic resources, generous landscaping to accent buildings, and high quality materials and construction.
- Develop compatibility standards to ensure existing single-family residences are protected from excessive light, noise, traffic or other disruptive nuisances.